

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LIMA 00776 282246Z

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY LIMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3510

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY QUITO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

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E.O. 511652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, AR, PE

SUBJECT: VISIT OF ARGENTINE ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF TO PERU

1. GENERAL ROBERT VIOLA, CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARGENTINE ARMY, ARRIVED IN LIMA ON JANUARY 23 FOR A SEVEN-DAY OFFICIAL MILITARY VISIT THAT INCLUDED A LUNCHEON-INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT MORALES BERMUDEZ, INSPECTIONS OF MILITARY INSTALLATIONS, A BRIEF TRIP TO AREQUIPA, RITUAL WREATH-LAYINGS, DECORATIONS, AND GIFT EXCHANGES. THE MOST NOTEWORTHY RESULT OF THE VISIT WAS THE CONFIRMATION THAT ARGENTINE PRESIDENT VIDELA WILL VISIT PERU SOME TIME IN 1977, PERHAPS IN APRIL. PERUVIAN PRIME MINISTER ARBULU, WHO ACCOMPANIED VIOLA TO AREQUIPA, ALSO REVEALED THERE THAT A RECIPROCAL VISIT TO ARGENTINA IS BEING CONSIDERED BY PRESIDENT MORALES BERMUDEZ.

2. THE VIOLA VISIT SPARKED INTEREST AND SPECULATION ABOUT A REVITALIZATION OF TRADITIONAL PERU-ARGENTINE TIES AND EVEN THE CREATION OF A "LIMA-BUENOS AIRES AXIS". VIOLA AND HIS PERUVIAN HOSTS AGREED IN PRINCIPLE ON INCREASED
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MILITARY EXCHANGES DESIGNED TO INTENSIFY "TRADITIONAL AND PERMANENT" MILITARY TIES BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. SPEECHES AND PRESS COMMENTARY PLAYED HEAVILY ON THE THEME OF HISTORIC CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PERU AND ARGENTINA DATING FROM GENERAL JOSE DE SAN MARTIN'S INVOLVEMENT IN PERU'S STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE. THE LIMA PERSS ON JANUARY 28 CARRIED AN EFE ITEM DATED

BUENOS AIRES, CITING AN ARTICLE IN THE DAILY LA OPINION THAT PROPOSED THE CREATION OF A "LIMA-BUENOS AIRES AXIS" IN THE FACE OF POSSIBLE HOSTILITIES BETWEEN PERU AND CHILE.

3. COMMENT: PERUVIANS WOULD SEE THE ARGENTINE VISIT AND CLOSE TIES WITH ARGENTINA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PERU-CHILE RIVALRY AND BOLIVIAN CORRIDOR QUESTION. ONE OBSERVER VOLUNTEERED TO AN EMBOFF THAT THE VIOLA VISIT WOULD MAKE CHILE THINK AGAIN ABOUT ITS "EFFORTS" TO SQUEEZE PERU IN A CHILE-ECUADOR AXIS. THIS NON-OFFICIAL OBSERVER ALSO PRAISED WHAT HE SAW AS FONMIN DE LA PUENTE'S DEFT HANDLING OF THE CHILEAN PROPOSAL FOR A BOLIVIAN OUTLET TO THE SEA, A PROPOSAL HE SUGGESTED WAS CYNICALLY DESIGNED MERELY TO EMBARRASS PERU. DEAN

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